

## NASAT Admissions Policy and Procedure - NASAT002

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### 1. Introduction

Thames Valley (the School), part of NAS Academies Trust (NASAT), is a publicly funded special school providing educational day places for pupils aged 5-16 with a diagnosis of Autism. The School works in partnership with local authorities and parents/carers to assess the suitability of pupils for a place at the School.

All pupils must have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) that refers to a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Autism is a spectrum condition which requires a continuum of provision. The School caters for pupils who are capable of working towards the age related expected standard National Curriculum.

The School provides an education for pupils who require Autism specific provision which is tailored to meet their social, sensory and communication needs, as well as providing support to enable them to manage levels of anxiety. These pupils are those identified as requiring a modified yet structured national curriculum content, with support from specialist staff within a specialist environment. This support includes a structured environment and high levels of targeted intervention and differentiation throughout the school day. Please see Appendix 1 for further information on categories of provision.

### 2. Aims

To ensure there are robust and transparent systems in place to support a fair and consistent approach to admissions.

### 3. Scope

This policy is relevant to all governors, staff, parents & carers, pupils and local authority representatives who are involved in the admission of a pupil to the School.

## **4. Roles & Responsibilities**

NASAT is responsible for this policy while Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) will monitor its implementation in each school.

### **NASAT Trustees responsibilities:**

- Ratify and regularly review this policy.

### **Local Governing Body responsibilities:**

- In conjunction with the Principal and SENCo, ensure local procedures are in place to effectively implement this policy within the School.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the policy and advise board of any necessary changes.
- To ensure that any issue that may be perceived as a potential reputational risk to NASAT is referred to the board or NASAT without delay.

### **The Principal's responsibilities:**

- To keep the Local Governing Body informed and updated on matters of admissions.
- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of this policy and that local procedures are followed.
- Ensure appropriate information is available for parents throughout the process.
- Allocate a member of the senior leadership team to process each referral, and ensure both the School and the family receive all relevant information prior to the pupil starting at the School.
- The leadership team will organise an open evening at the School for prospective parents at least annually and provide opportunities for parental/guardians visits.

## **5. Typical Profile of Admissions**

The School is designated for pupils with a diagnosis of Autism and its provision is designed accordingly as follows:

- The Schools is designated as Autism specific. The School accept Local Authority referrals on behalf of pupils who have an Autism Spectrum diagnosis (or are awaiting diagnosis and are recognised by professionals as having social communication difficulties that cause a major barrier to learning) in accordance with the admissions procedure set out below.
- It is necessary for pupils to have an existing or proposed EHCP (including pupils undergoing an EHCP assessment) which makes clear reference to a diagnosis of Autism (but not with a Severe Learning Difficulty specified). In addition to an Autism Spectrum diagnosis, the EHCP may include similar presenting features such as language, sensory, behaviour or communication difficulties.
- Our pupils work at broadly age-related levels of attainment and we anticipate that they will gain a range of qualifications, including functional skills and GCSEs/Level 2 courses.

- Pupils may also have additional needs, for example obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Pupils may also have associated needs in the areas of emotional, social and communication and interaction development and/or psychological or mental health difficulties. In addition, pupils may have sensory, or physical/motor difficulties.
- We strongly encourage places for pupils who have a diagnosis of Autism and who are Children in Care , or have been previously been classed as looked after by their Local Authority.
- Where possible, an identified and agreed number of pupil placements will be available within each key stage. This is to facilitate age appropriate peer groups, progression and organisation of timetable.
- Our schools wish for parents to be supportive of a placement, and for parents and the placing Local authority to therefore agree to the school being the proposed named provider in the EHCP.
- The School is unable to offer places to families who wish to privately fund the placement.
- Unsuitability or compatibility concerns: The School will carefully consider (through the referral process) whether the placement is suitable for the pupil's age, ability, aptitude and Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)and/or whether the placement would be compatible with the efficient education of others. This may entail, for example, consideration of any vulnerability that is likely to be felt by any existing pupils within the School, whether the proposed admission would have any potential negative impact and any concerns for the safety and wellbeing of others.
- There is a recommended Admissions Priority Area (APA) for the School that it is based on:
  - no more than 45 minutes travel time from the school (Primary pupils) and
  - no more than 60 minutes travel time from the school (Secondary pupils.)

## **6. Admissions**

All applications for places at the School will be in accordance with the NASAT's funding agreements, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 to 25 years (SEND Code of Practice) and the School Admissions Code 2021 (the Code). NASAT is required by its funding agreements to comply with these codes, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#).

Parents are encouraged to arrange to visit the School and to request information about the School (including the admission process). Parents should inform their Local Authority of their preference for a place at the School and may ask their Local Authority to name the School in their pupil's EHCP. On some occasions, Local Authority professionals who are involved in a pupil's placement or who have a significant professional interest in their wellbeing, may recommend that the School may meet their needs and inform parents.

The School can only proceed to the admissions stage with Local Authority support. We therefore encourage parents to engage in a dialogue with their Local Authority to express a preference for the School.

## **7. Number of Available Places**

The School has an overall capacity of 54 places with class sizes of a maximum of 6 pupils. The School is not able to exceed those place numbers because that would result in inefficient education for other pupils in the School.

## **8. Pupil with an EHCP where the Local Authority intends to name the School**

- Where the Local Authority intends to name the School in an EHCP, the School will consider the proposal and will consent to being named, except where the placement would be unsuitable for the pupil's age, ability, aptitude or SEND, and/or admitting the pupil would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for other pupil, and where no reasonable steps can be made to secure compatibility.
- In deciding whether a pupil's inclusion would be unsuitable or incompatible the School will have regard to the relevant law and the SEND Code of Practice.
- If the School determines that the placement would be unsuitable or incompatible it will respond within 15 days notifying the Local Authority that it does not agree that the School should be named in the EHCP. The School will set out the facts and matters it relies upon in support of its contention that the placement would be unsuitable for the pupil's age, ability, aptitude or SEND and/or that admitting that pupil would be incompatible with the efficient education of other pupils; and the School cannot take reasonable steps to secure compatibility.
- Where the School considers that it should not have been named in the EHCP, the School may ask the Secretary of State to determine that the Local Authority has acted unreasonably in naming it and to make an order directing the Local Authority to amend the pupil's EHCP by removing the name of the School.

## **9. Pupil without an EHCP**

- NASAT will have due regard to its funding agreements, including any conditions relating to the admission of pupils without an EHCP.
- The School may admit a pupil to the school if:
  - He/she is admitted for the purposes of an assessment of his educational needs with agreement with the Local Authority, the pupil's parents and any person whose advice is to be sought in accordance with regulation 7 of the Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (Consolidation) (Regulations) 2001;
  - He/she remains admitted following an assessment of his educational needs;
  - He/she is admitted following a change in his/her circumstances, with the agreement of the Local Authority, the School and the pupil's parents.
- If a pupil without an EHCP has been admitted to the School for the purpose of an assessment (as identified above) the School will allow the pupil to remain at the

School until the expiry of 10 school days after the Local Authority serve a notice that they do not propose to make an EHCP, or until an EHCP is made.

The School will provide the Local Authority with views to help with the decision-making process. In order to do this, the School may undertake further assessments of prospective pupils to establish whether the School can meet their needs. At the request of the Local Authority (and having received appropriate paperwork), the School assessment team may observe/assess the pupil at their home or current school.

Where possible, the School will speak with parents and analyse reports from previous school placements in order to understand how best to meet the pupil's needs. It is expected that recent (within 6 months prior to referral initiation) and relevant (based upon current pupil placement situation and individual and identified need) professional reports will be provided by those working directly with the pupil, or by the Local Authority lead. Where reports are not available and/or further information is required, the School will arrange a more detailed assessment route and report findings to confirm for admission.

Please see Appendix 1 for further details of the assessment process.

## **10. Appeals**

Should a placement be considered unsuitable for a pupil (following the admissions procedure) feedback to parents/carers will be provided by the Local Authority as to the grounds for the decision.

If the Local Authority decides not to name the School in a pupil's EHCP the parents have the right to appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and should refer directly to the Local Authority for contact details and their intention to appeal a decision. The School does not have this right.

## **11. Communication and Confidentiality**

All decisions relating to the proposed placement of any individual are confidential. There will be open and regular communication with parents/carers and advocates, which acknowledges and respects the needs of each young person. The School will liaise with the Local Authority to ensure they are kept up to date.

## Appendices:

### Appendix 1 - Assessment Process

1. Once a referral and all relevant paperwork have been received by the School, the application will be reviewed by a member of the senior leadership team who will then discuss the application with at least one professional from the School. A letter/email acknowledging receipt of the referral will be sent from the School to the Local Authority within 15 calendar days of receipt.
2. If, following scrutiny of the received paperwork, it is likely that the pupil may be suitable for the School, a member of the senior leadership team will arrange to meet and observe/assess the prospective pupil. This may be:
  - In their current school (preferred option in most cases)
  - In the home setting (if it is in the home setting then two members of staff will visit as per Home Visits policy)
  - During a visit to the School] (in which case this step may be combined with Stage 5)

*The School will be flexible in this process in order to respond appropriately to the differing needs of applicants.*

3. An NAS **pre-admission assessment form** will be completed by a member of the senior leadership team and / or Transdisciplinary team and presented to senior leadership team, for further consideration of a placement offer. A decision made by the senior leadership team will be recorded and the relevant feedback will be given to the referring Local Authority. The School has 15 calendar days to respond to the Local Authority about the proposed placement.
4. If there is evidence and it is agreed by the senior leadership team that the School can meet the pupil's needs, a letter of a placement offer is sent to the Local Authority. The Local Authority will arrange for amendments to the EHCP (part 4) or the young person's EHCP if they agree with the decision. The 'letter of a placement offer' to the Local Authority will be provided by the School within the required 15-day period, providing information to indicate that the School is able to meet the pupil's needs. Following this, an admission start date will be determined.

If there is insufficient evidence that, at this stage, a formal placement offer can be made, further investigation and/or assessment will be necessary and the School expects the LA to take the necessary action to provide it with sufficient evidence. The LA will not be able to carry out a lawful consultation regarding the Pupil's admission to the School unless it provides the School with sufficient, up to date information to enable the School to make an intelligent and informed decision as to whether it can include the pupil. If the School and Local Authority agree this is necessary, it will be arranged by the school team and will determine whether the school can meet the needs of the individual. Examples where further assessment may be required are: high medical needs, missing or out of date information received, complex mental health needs, complex learning needs, higher support levels may be required, specialist intervention or availability of resources

or where there is evidence of high-risk behaviours such as severe self-harm or suicidal ideation.

5. The Principal will decide if a **compatibility assessment** is required. This will support decisions about whether the individual can be supported effectively in the current class / year groups including whether the placement would have any detrimental effect on existing pupils.
6. If at this stage or any other stage of this process the admissions review panel consider the placement would be unsuitable for the pupil's age, ability, aptitude or SEND or that admitting that pupil would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, a letter stating reasons for the decision will be sent to the Local Authority.
7. Usually following stages 3 - 6 of the above, parents/carers and the pupil may be invited for a tour of the School and presentation about the provision, arranged by the School. Where the young person attends, an experienced member of staff may encourage them to engage in a preferred activity enabling the School to assess how they respond to the environment and peers. The member of the senior leadership team meeting with the family will use the opportunity to obtain up to date further information regarding the young person in order to establish how the School will meet the following areas of need:
  - Social communication
  - Behaviour
  - Academic ability
  - Independent living skills
  - Religious and cultural needs
  - Parents' aspirations for the future/what they want the School to do

## Flowchart

